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THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS
AND OTHER POEMS

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

GEORGE STERLING

111

WITHDRAWN

SAN FRANCISCO

A. M. ROBERTSON

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BY GEORGE STERLING

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DEDICATION

TO AMBROSE BIERCE

*Ah! glad to thy decree I bow,
From whose unquestioned hand did fall,
Beyond a lesser to recall,
The solemn laurels on my brow.*

*I tremble with the splendid weight.
To mine unworth 't is given to know
How dread the charge I undergo
Who claim the holy Muse as mate.*

*Her altars lift incessant fire;
She holds no truce with Death nor Peace;
Till mind degrade and beauty cease,
She calls her chosen to the Lyre.*

DEDICATION

*Remiss the ministry they bear
Who serve her with divided heart;
She stands reluctant to impart
Her strength to purpose, end, or care.*

*Shall best I guard her hallowed light
By sheltered service on her tow'rs,
Or strife with Mammon and the pow'rs
That hold humanity in night?*

*I loose the choral trumpet's gleam,
But half its thunder leave untried;
Midway on doubting vans I glide,
Nor hasten to the heights of dream.*

*A shadow o'er the vision runs:
I hear a grieving from the lands
Where Sorrow heavy-sceptred stands,
And moanings from the mist of suns.*

DEDICATION

Lo! men in weariness behold

No respite from the toils of Time.

Their children wander in the slime

Round Mammon's domes of plundered gold,

And taste the bitterness of dearth.

Must they beyond my conscience wait,

Or lack my voice as advocate

To cry their wrongs athwart the earth?

Shall Song, delinquent, win from life

The light and rapture that she knows,

And sleep at last where Lethe flows,

A stranger to the human strife?

Shall Art fare sunward, and disdain

The patient hands that smooth her ways?

Shall she, delighting, scorn to raise

The fallen on their path of pain?

DEDICATION

*So questioning, can I endure
The peace of mine uplifted place?
Accused and judge, I fear to face
The dumb tribunals of the poor.*

*But Doubt, in unrelenting quest,
Upon the psychic whirlwind rides;
Her potent moons advance the tides
That urge her maelstroms to unrest.*

*With virgin powers my spirit waits;
Shall she, unequal, judge her God,
Or trespass where His feet have trod
Whenas He wrought to arm His fates?*

*What hath been, is. What is, shall be.
May man, presuming, intervene
On what his Lords have long foreseen
And sealed unto eternity?*

DEDICATION

*Shall Art annul and Song disclaim
The laws that guard their deeper good?
Or hold so little understood
The larger issues of their fame?*

*Can Song accord the light she brings
In crypts where Beauty never woke?
Share with Utility his yoke,
Yet roam her sky on lucent wings?*

*How darkly wait the silent years
Wherein the Vision veils the End!
May I, untroubled, comprehend
The truths that best are seen thro' tears?*

*Emotion smites with blinded aim;
Religion seeks, a baffled wraith,
The ignis fatuus of Faith,
And Learning tends a ruthless flame.*

DEDICATION

*I, fearful of Unreason's drink,
Avail me of a deeper sight,
And turn me to thy clearer light,
In which as babes we others blink.*

August, 1901.

MEMORIAL DAY

1901

To each the city of his dream!

Far lifts the purple of its walls,
And pure its domes eternal gleam
Above the promise of its halls.

Unto each soul her chosen ways

And travail upward from the night.
Enough, that from her dark of days
She have in quest the trusted light.

Tho' in futility she hold,

To heights eternally afar,
Eyes that the waited morning's gold
Bless never—she hath stood a star.

MEMORIAL DAY

Weary the ways whereon we strive
To heirdom of the ends of strife:
Sabre and cannon, lance and gyve
Prepare the after-peace of life.

Irrevocable, fraught with dread,
The mandates of the cosmic plan
Await in trceries of red
The men that frame the House of Man,

Whereof as holy lies the stone
Deep in obscurities of dust,
As that whereby the years shall own
The far fulfillment of the Trust.

Ah, dream of unavailing eyes!
Ah, glory of the lucent cross
By hope foreseen on future skies,
To hush the memory of loss!

MEMORIAL DAY

The cannon take their pall of rust,
Its gentler harvests wait the sword,
The deep of war's recurrent lust
Submissive to a deeper Word.

As honored by that farther day
Shall be the warrior as the bard;
And equal, shall its wisdom say,
The hands that build, the hands that guard.

Large writ in blood their annals burn,
And hallowed, tho' the morning star
Of Peace arise, and races earn
The red affranchisement of war.

O vision of a nation crowned
With purer light by lasting Peace,
'Neath altered skies whence Battle frowned
And Pain had terrible release!

MEMORIAL DAY

Deep in our dark of strife and wrong,
Blinded we loose a sanguine flood,
Entreating from our Fates ere long
The guerdon of the holy blood—

Diviner cities wrought anew
In all that Love and Art may lend,
And heights of freedom whereunto
We deem the toiling ages trend.

Pleasant, O Love, thy garden-close
And murmur of the untroubled dove,
But sterner walls constrain thy foes,
And other sounds than thine, O Love!—

Incitement of the whining fife
And mutter of the troubled drum,
Clamor of life that reels from life,
Cannon that smite all clamor dumb!

MEMORIAL DAY

Supreme, O Art! thy splendors blaze,
And fair the shrine thy sons attain;
But ruder hands on darker ways
Ensure the incomparable fane.

(So gently came the feet of Spring
Along the wintry ways afar,
So rich with song the valleys ring,
We deem we have but dreamt of war.)

And we, above the war-won graves,
Stand conscious of their homage due;
We wander where the cypress waves,
Sad for the dead we never knew—

From whom we gathered, in regret,
Tribute of unregretful breath;
On whom the panoply we set
That molders on the road of Death.

MEMORIAL DAY

So now their time held consecrate
We greet in hall and temple, or
Where Summer, calling at the gate,
Has thrown her blossoms in before.

And rose and marble clasp the dead,
And gleam about the ghostly court,
To quieter camp the soldier led,
The seaman to a farther port.

How deep they lie from voice or tear!
With silence how supremely blest!—
So far in peace they cannot hear
The grieving pines above their rest.

Tho' strongly on their holy place
The cumbrous nations prove their might,
Unheard the battle-thunders pace
Above the nations of the night.

MEMORIAL DAY

A sense of this their dreamlessness
Arises to the mortal brow.
We deem their quietudes confess
To war's futility, that now

Above the dust so swift to slay
Alight the lily's tender snows,
And on the long-forgiven clay
Its foeman's children loose the rose.

Set to duration of the bronze,
The soldier stands all ages' guest:
Harness of high renown he dons,
But sweeter fame the flowers attest.

MEMORIAL DAY

Content, as though for valor crowned,
Austere, untroubled, rest the dead—
The citadel of silence found,
And all its armament of dread.

Before whose imminence we pause
And question far the nightward posts,
And seek with darkened eyes the cause
Of menace to the mortal hosts:

Upon Whose war our foe is sent;
What purpose his invasions prove;
Or issues of the dim intent
Wherewith his ghostly legions move.

But never answer dayward ran,
Nor message from the eternal scouts,
Resolving to our anxious van
The riddle of the dark redoubts.

MEMORIAL DAY

Perchance they know the secret sought,
 (Tidings we reach from Time to share;
That bought with life were cheaply bought),
 But find the message dread to bear.

Perchance, to that imputed night
 The future lies too sadly clear;
Perchance the soldier's better sight
 Confirms the Prophecy of Fear,

Revealing, to the spirit's quest,
 The Mother in whose need the swords
He faced with unregarded breast,
 In vassalage to monstrous lords.

For in the prophet's light of dream,
 She stands immanacled in gold,
Disclosing, as the sages deem,
 Decadence from the worth of old.

MEMORIAL DAY

O vision of insurgent doom,
And thunders holden to that day!
Portentous in that farther gloom,
The Titans bend above their prey.

And all that sky is dark with wings
That bear to feasts of infamy
And shame of unconjectured things
The vampire brood of luxury.

Lo! Power, with encrimsoned hands,
The blood-draught of his shambles sips;
And Justice at her altar stands
And stammers with polluted lips;

Lo! man to Man as alien seems,
Nor seeks, for serfdom to delight,
Divergence of the chartered streams
That sate the languid parasite;

MEMORIAL DAY

But sits the throne of privilege,
And claims all lordship of the soil,
And wrings from penury the pledge
Of lifelong servitude to toil,

Forgetting, in the lust for pow'r,
The peoples faithless to their trust,
Who joined, at Time's avenging hour,
The nations touched by Time to dust. . . .

So dark the doom our sages feel
Impendent; but the Fates have stood
Unknown of man, nor deign to seal
The auguries of likelihood.

For peril that the seer foresees,
Perils transcending intervene:
Transition holds her mysteries
Accordant to the unforeseen.

MEMORIAL DAY

And evil comes with good allied,
Nor hath supremacy of scope.
The Builder and the Plan abide.
We hope, who are the sons of Hope.

O timeless Light beyond the years,
Illumine Thy mysteries of fate!
Absolve the future of its fears,
And loose us from the law of hate!

POESY

Maiden! to whom our Fates assign
The tale of mortal years,
What joyance on thy lips divine
And at thy heart what tears!

Musest thou girt with memories
Of ancient wars and woes—
The tale of quest on lonely seas
For far Romance's rose?

Are thine but Joy's untroubled hours—
Days fashioned gentlewise?
(So soft the winds that stir thy flow'rs,
So blue thy distant skies!)

POESY

For as the birds of Tempe glad,
 Called by the dawn from sleep,
Are thine exultant chords, or sad
 As twilight on the deep.

Thine is the dusk where Love hath knelt
 To cry his holy pain;
The flower of all that Grief hath felt
 Hath found in thee its fane.

Can light and hue, imperfect, limn,
 Can word of man confess
The vision radiant or dim
 Of thy dear loveliness?

I dream thy tresses float as gold
 Spun to a mist of light;
I deem thy voice as sorrow told
 In music to the night.

POESY

Softer than Hebe's to allure
 Gleam thine immortal eyes,
Great with fair memories, and pure
 As dews in Paradise.

Thy lips seem harmonies unheard,
 Portals to perfect sound,
That shrine, but render not, that word
 The soul hath never found.

Can Art a fairer pathway trace
 Than that thy chosen share,
Or we forget thy regnant face,
 Who hold the gods less fair?

So long as Beauty's reign endure
 Art thou her voice to me;
And all I note of high and pure
 Seem shadows cast by thee—

POESY

All marvels delicate or bright—
To sense but scarce confest:
Foam, fragrance, latencies of light
That make a gem's unrest;

Mist, and the tiny dawns that hide
About the opal-stone,
Or sunset Edens that abide
Till day and dusk are flown.

Thou gleam'st, an unrecorded star,
(Happy their eyes that see!)
From domes of moonlight built afar
In Fancy's empery.

Thy flight is ever at the verge
Of Art's horizon-line;
Remote, where dream and beauty merge,
Thy wings irradiant shine.

POESY

I may not vaunt thy mystic grace,
Nor thy communion tell,
Unseen as Sleep's approaching face,
Unheard as her farewell—

Who from the beautiful hast wrought
A vision on the mind
Too fair for Hope to leave unsought
Or human heart to find.

THE CITY OF MUSIC

Where lonely now Scamander flows
And scattered lies the hero's pyre,
The towers of Troy (saith Song) arose
Accordant to Apollo's lyre,

When Music, floating on the storm
Of chords that cried Infinity,
Swept unto permanence of form
The city of the Dardan sea.

And 'neath an arch that Iris drew
From headlands of celestial gold,
Shone forth from heaven's pacific blue
The faces of the gods of old.

But when I list to Music cry
Her ecstasies of grief and joy,
Diviner visions throng my sky,
And lordlier domes than those of Troy.

TO ONE LOVED

God, as He shaped thy beauty, took
What element divine?
For Oh! I deem His angels look
From Heaven with eyes like thine.

They are as gems by Beauty wrought
To blossoms pure and strange—
Forgotten flowers the soul hath sought
Where things immortal range.

I may not know the visions seen
Within their crystal scope,
For oft they are as skies serene
In all that Love can hope;

But when in those enchanted skies
The shadows come and go,
They seem as deeps whence Music sighs
But cannot tell her woe.

TO ONE LOVED

Such are God's jewels. Tho' their light
May grace but mortal years,
Divinely yet they star our night,
More beautiful for tears.

They are as voice to things that lie
Beyond the bourne of speech—
Too great for ecstasy to sigh,
Too fair for tongue to teach.

They are as that intrinsic word
That Nature strives to say—
By night an immanence unheard,
A peacelessness by day.

And thus their gentle glories are
A mystery to me
So kindred to the evening star,
The mountains and the sea,

TO ONE LOVED

That when we part my soul must yet
 Regard, in wanderings,
The beauty and the sadness met
 In far, eternal things.

THE SUMMER OF THE GODS

Methought in dream I saw Ulysses bold—

Lured by strange music to the hidden West—

Pass onward in that memorable quest

Of islands where the demigods of old

Beyond the portals of Elysium hold

The twilight and the threnodies of rest.

Great gleamed the sunset upon ocean's breast

And all those urgent oars cast up its gold.

Hushed are the voices of the mythic dales

And lost the days whose dawn and eve of yore

Held yet a mystery whose kindly veils

Fell as a radiance on sea and shore,

Whose eastward moons and suns departing bore

A glory unto far, intrepid sails.

THE LORDS OF PAIN

The Lords of Pain are mightier by night:
 Swiftly, as darkness closed the dreary day,
 They marshalled whose inimical array
I saw not, conscious only of their might,
As, thro' the hours' intolerable flight
 And swoon recurrent of the spirit, they
 Wrought grievously their will upon the clay,
Till respite of the dawn's delaying light.

Not thus, O Life! would I depart from thee—
 Relinquishing at Agony's command
The lights and shadows of thine empery;
 But so put by the guerdon of the breath
As one grown weary in a twilight land,
 Whom Music leads to Sleep, and Sleep
 to Death.

THE FOG SIREN

The grey mist veils the deep, the seeming ghost,
Forlorn and olden, of the world's lost seas.
Veering to fancies of the muffled breeze,
There moans with ocean down the shrouded coast
(Ceaseless, as from eternal pain and post,
And born of woe no mortal may appease)
The siren's grieving, that, as daylight flees,
Summons the drowned, a solemn shadow-host.

Then, as the pallid spectres landward creep,
Apocalyptic voices haunt the gloom;
We hear, upon the troubling of the deep,
The bellow of the Beast drawn down to doom;
And rending all Death's empire in its sweep,
The trumpet's groaning rolls athwart the tomb.

TO MISS CONSTANCE CRAWLEY
IN "EVERYMAN"

Thine is the frailest of the arts
And like the flower must pass;
Its empery in human hearts
Dies with the voice, alas!

The poet tells to years unborn
His dreams of joy or woe;
His crown is of a farther morn,
From hands he shall not know.

Tho' time, in tardy reckoning,
Placed laurels on my brow,
Sing as I might, I could not sing
A fairer dream than thou —

Who by thine art and haunting face
Hast filled a thoughtful hour
With somewhat of the passing grace
Of twilight and the flow'r.

TO IMAGINATION

Thou needest not the guides of Sense,
O soul and inner light of song!
Despotic Wisdom works thee wrong
And frowning Reason chides thee hence.

Thy lands are hid from ordered sight:
Thy word an alien realm hath made,
Suffused as with the glory laid
On mountains domed by sunset-light.

In visioned memory supreme,
Thy heart beholds forgotten things;
Thy winds recall the fabled kings,
And whisper Time's remotest dream.

TO IMAGINATION

Thy feet obtain the hidden ways
Where steal the angels of the dawn
Down ferny glooms that hide the fawn,
Or evening lulls the woodland maze.

Thy wings at heavenly vigils rest,
Or lost in human zeniths roam —
Far down, the billow slips to foam,
The ships declare their ancient quest.

Thine eyes forsake the sterile noon,
Till mottled flowers, where Circe treads,
Like hooded serpents sway their heads,
In gardens ghostly with the moon.

Who once hath known thy harp's appeal
Shall hold its music past his lore —
Desirous of the crystallised shore
And snows thy lancing stars reveal.

TO A LILY

Thou livest yet! Then few the days,
Altho' they seem not few,
Since here we watched, on garden ways,
Thy pure and moonlit dew.

She bent thy pallor to caress,
As snow that toucheth snow;
Thou couldst not know her gentleness,
Tho' angels now may know.

She spoke of all that Love might dream,
And dreaming, know divine;
Till on her face I saw the gleam
Of holier dews than thine.

TO A LILY

She spoke of God, of Change, of Death;
Blinded, I could not tell
Why grief so trembled on her breath:
'T was thus she spoke farewell!

Farewell—tho' yet her soul bereaved,
In mercy unconfessed
Forbore to tell a heart ungrieved
How soon her own would rest.

Here in the silence, I at last
Render (too late? unheard?)
Mine own farewell, ah! deeply past
All tale of tear or word.

“WITH THE STRENGTH OF
DREAMS ”

I saw the Lesbian Sappho bowed in light
Before the sapphire altar of the sea —
Song-swept, a lyre on which in threnody
Th’ ascendant tremors of her spirit’s might
Thrilled chord on chord to music. In my flight
From dream to dream, I paused; I wept;
while she
Sang till I saw the western glory flee,
A molten pearl, one with the wine of night.

I know not if the blossom of their day,
In Paradise, be blessed with fairer fruit;
If deeper ecstasies of music may,
Dying or latent, fill their fancied lute,
Or happier tear-drops find the olden way,
Ere yet the twilight seraphim be mute.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

*To Whom the unceasing suns belong,
And cause is one with consequence,—
To Whose divine inclusive sense
The moan is blended with the song.*

—AMBROSE BIERCE.

I.

The winter sunset fronts the North. . . .
The light deserts the quiet sky. . . .
From their far gates how silently
The stars of evening tremble forth!

Time, to thy sight what peace they share
On Night's inviolable breast!
Remote in solitudes of rest,
Afar from human change or care.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Eternity, unto thine eyes

 In war's unrest their legions surge,
 Foam of the cosmic tides that urge
The battle of contending skies,

The war whose waves of onslaught, met

 Where night's abysses storm afar,
 Break on the high, tremendous bar
Athwart that central ocean set—

From seas whose cyclic ebb and sweep,

 Unseen to Life's oblivious hours,
 Are ostent of the changeless Pow'rs
That hold dominion of the Deep.

O armies of eternal night,

 How flame your guidons on the dark!
 Silent we turn from Time to hark
What final Orders sway your might.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Cold from colossal ramparts gleam,
At their insuperable posts,
The seven princes of the hosts
Who guard the holy North supreme;

Who watch the phalanxes remote
That, gathered in opposing skies,
Far on the southern wastes arise,
Marshalled by flaming Fomalhaut.

Altair, what captains compass thee?
What foes, Aldebaran, are thine?
Red with what blood of wars divine
Glow that immortal panoply?

What music from Capella runs?
How hold the Pleiades their bond?
How storms the hidden war beyond
Orion's dreadful sword of suns?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

When, on what hostile firmament,
 Shall stars unnamed contend our gyre,
 'Mid councils of Boötes' fire,
Or night of Vega's fury spent?

What tidings of the heavenly fray?
 These, as our sages nightward turn
 To gaze within the gulfs where burn
The helms of that sublime array:

Splendors of elemental strife;
 Smit suns that startle back the gloom;
 New light whose tale of stellar doom
Fares to uncomprehending life;

Profounds of fire whose maelstroms froth
 To gathered armies of offense;
 Cohorts unwearable, immense,
And bulks wherewith the Dark is wroth;

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Reserves and urgencies of light
That flame upon the battle's path,
And allied suns that brave the wrath
Of systems leagued athwart the night;

Menace of silent ranks that sweep
Unto irrevocable wars,
And onset of titanic cars
In Armageddons of the Deep!

Deem we their enginery was not,
Far in the dim, eternal past?
Deem we eternity at last
Will find their thunders unbegot?

How haste the unresting feet of Change,
On life's stupendous orbit set!
She walks a way her blood hath wet,
Yet deems her path untrodden, strange.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

By night's immeasurable dome
 She deems her hopes in surety held—
 Lo! from insurgent deeps impelled
The fleeting systems lapse like foam.

Unshared she deems the kindred skies;
 But runic gulf and star proclaim
 (Archival gloom, prophetic flame)
The immutable infinities:

Vague on the night the mist we mark
 That tells where met the random suns:
 In changeless molds of law it runs
To orbs that roam anew the dark,

And unto which the worlds are born,
 Where Life awakes to know again
 The light of stars, caress of rain,
And winds of the forgotten morn.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Lift up, ye everlasting gates

Whence fare her feet to wars unknown,
To heights august of Reason's throne,
And heritage of ampler Fates!

When she, the mindless clay no more

In Lust's or Fear's potential hands,
Shall range her uncontested lands
Or sister world's befriending shore.

Till lapse her beatific years

In emperies of art untold,
The music of her age of gold
Requiting for unnumbered tears;

Till she behold—the visual boon

Surviving elemental risk—
The nearing sun's enormous disc,
Blood-red at dusk of sullen noon;

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Till her appointed course be run;
Till on the darkness faint her breath,
Flown to the silent void, and Death
Sit crowned upon the ashen sun.

Till sun and sun be met at last
In warfare that annuls the night,
When sea and mountain start to light,
Pyres of the sacrificial past,

Dim veils of fire, O world! that were
The stubborn bastions of thy frame,
And reaches of abysmal flame
Wherein thy spectral oceans stir—

A mist upon the vassal skies
Gyrant to Betelgeuse—a flare
Upon the midnights round Altair—
A portent to barbaric eyes.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

O dread and strong Eternity!
Prickt in an instant of thy clime,
The bubble of Antares' time
Is one with thine unchanging sea.

Ever the star, unstable, frames
Her transitory throne of fire,
But in thy sight how soon expire,
How soon recur, the inviolate flames!—

Throbs of the fitful sun that are
Unto thine amplitude of sight,
Even as the quick unrest of light
That stirs, to mortal sense, the star.

What silence rules the ghostly hours
That guard the close of human sleep!
Aldebaran crowns the western deep;
Belted with suns Orion tow'rs,

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

And greaved with light of worlds destroyed,
And girt with firmamental gloom,
Abides his far, portended doom
And menace of the warring void.

Shall night allay his high unrest?
Shall Time his destinies aver,
Or darkened vastitude deter
His feet from their immortal quest?

Shall augury his goal impart,
Or mind his hidden steps retrace
To mausolean pits of space
Where throbs the Hydra's crimson heart?

Ephemeral, may Life declare
What quarry from the Lion runs,
And sway the inexorable suns
Where gape the abysses of his lair?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

O Night, what legions serve thy wars!

Lo! thy terrific battle-line—

The rayless bulk, the blazing Sign,
The leagued infinity of stars!

Remote they burn whose dread array

Glow from the dark a dust of fire;

Unheard the storm of Rigel's ire,
A grain of light Arcturus' day.

Unheard their antiphon of death

Who gleam Capella's cosmic foes;

Unseen the war whose causal throes
Perturb gigantic Algol's breath—

Whom from afar we mete and name

Ere Light and Life their doom fulfill,

Spawn of the Power whose æons still
The suns of Taurus armed with flame.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

What sound shall pass the gulfs where groan
 Their sullen axles on the night?
 What thunder from the strands of light
Whence Vega glares on worlds unknown?

O Deep whose very silence stuns!
 Where Light is powerless to illumine
 Lost in immensities of gloom
That dwarf to motes the flaring suns.

O Night where Time and Sorrow cease!
 Eternal magnitude of dark
 Wherein Aldebaran drifts a spark,
And Sirius is hushed to peace!

O Tides that foam on strands untrod,
 From seas in everlasting prime,
 To light where Life looks forth on Time,
And Pain, unanswered, questions God!

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

What Power, with inclusive sweep
And rigor of compelling bars,
Shall curb the furies of the stars,
And still the troubling of that Deep?

What will shall calm that wrathful sky?
Crave ye tranquillities of light
Who stand the sons of war and night?
Behold! the Abyss hath given reply.

Wards of Whose realm shall ye avail
To loose the tentacles of force
That drag Arcturus from his course,
And rend the weight of Procyon's mail?

Shall yet your feet essay, unharmed,
The glare of cosmic leaguers met
Round stellar strongholds gulfward set,
With night and fire supremely armed?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Shall sun or cycle yet confirm
 Your lordship to the unceded Vast,
 Or human period outlast
The vigil of Capella's term?

Deem ye the Eternal Mind will change
 The throned infinity of law
 That never æon altered saw
In all the Past's eternal range?

Child of unrest, but fain for peace,
 Life dreams, in her expectant dark,
 Of final things, and waits to hark
Conclusive trumpets crying cease.

She lifts an alien voice to call
 To near Denebola: "O sun!
 A little, and thy day is done,
A little, and the Night is all."

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

A little, and his rays, far-flown,
Gleam in the dews upon her grave,
The storied pomps her epochs gave
A dust within her deserts lone.

Yea! so shall Life on worlds afar
Muse idly of a cosmic tomb,
Where now past Alioth the gloom
Stirs not with her awaited star.

Her fate, how stranger than we deem!
Tho' Faith behold with trusting eyes
A vision on transmuted skies—
The splendors of the human dream;

To live, tho' Pain and Sorrow cease;
To reach the high Eternal Heart;
To know Infinity, nor part;
To find the far Ideal, Peace—

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

The life of each perfected world
 August archangels chanting praise,
 Deep-ranked in everlasting ways,
With wings of grief and exile furled.

O dream not all the worlds fulfill!
 Unblest, unbidden, save of hope.
 Not for finality the scope
And strength of that unaltered Will.

The eternal Night hath writ in stars
 Denial of the ends ye name;
 Ye stand rebuked by suns who claim
The consummation of her wars.

Constrained to what abysmal pole
 Shall severed armies close their flanks
 To stand with deviated ranks,
Subserving to a final goal?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Shall Godhead dream a transient thing?
Strives He for that which now He lacks?
Shall Law's dominion melt as wax
At touch of Hope's irradiant wing?

Are these the towers His hands have wrought?
Dreams He the dream of end and plan
Dear to the finity of man,
And shall mutation rule His thought?

What powers throng the pregnant gloom!
Unseen, the ministers of Law
Reach from eternity to draw
The suns to predetermined doom.

On Law ye serve with kindred might,
Atom and world that hold her ways;
The firefly's mote, the comet's blaze,
Are equal in her perfect sight.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Her bonds compel the Vast where boils
Intensest Spica's sea of fire;
Her lips decree the hidden gyre
Of bulks that strain in Algol's toils.

Subject to Law's resistless word,
Thy hands, O Force! resolve the star,
And toil, at Alphard's battle-car,
His flaming panoply to gird.

Charged, the immeasured gulfs transmit
Her mandate to the fonts of life,
Inciting to the governed strife
Whereby the lethal voids are lit,

With augment of imperious tides
On vague, illimitable coasts,
And battle-haze of merging hosts
To which the flare of Vega rides.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

“But nay!” ye cry, “we trust her hands
Induce an un conjectured morn,
To whose divine fulfillment born,
Her strength irrevocable stands.”

O lights by which, far-taught, we trace
The path of Life from death to death!
O fanes of her recurrent breath,
And strength of Night’s annulling mace!—

Profounds whose silences proclaim
What realms of mystery and awe!
Colossal Wraths extolling Law
From unsubverted thrones of flame!—

Suns of the Lyre whose thunders rise
From chords the eternal Hands have smit!
Stars of the Sword a moment lit
Ere Life re-name her altered skies!—

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Without beginning, aim or end;
Supreme, incessant, unbegot;
The systems change, but goal is not,
Where the Infinities attend.

Deem ye their armaments confess
A source of mutable desire?
Think ye He mailed His thought in fire
And called from night and nothingness

And armed for Time their high array?
Dream ye Infinity was bent
Upon a whim, a drama spent
Within an instant of His day?

Think ye He broke His dream indeed,
And rent His deep with fearful Pow'rs,
That Man inherit fadeless bow'rs?
Desiring, He would know a need!

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Nay! stable His Infinity,
Beyond mutation or desire.
The visions pass. The worlds expire,
Unfathomed still their mystery.

So hath He dreamt. So stands His night,
Wherein the suns abiding range,
Dust of the dynasties of change,
And altars of eternal light.

December, 1901.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

II.

My sleep was like a summer sky
That held the music of a lark:
I waken to the voiceless dark
And life's more silent mystery.

Night with her fleeting hours, how brief
To watch beyond her vault sublime
The gygrant systems meting Time,
That holds the timelessness of grief!

How pure the light their legions shed!
How calm above the crumbling tomb
Of race and epoch passed to gloom
No ray can pierce nor mortal tread!

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

What gulfs define the cosmic storm!

The torrent of Capella's light

A needle on the nerves of sight

Till Force annul the bonds of form;

Till Alcor vanish from the void

Wherein the Dragon dares the waste,

Wherein the spawn of Alioth haste

To ghostly bastions long destroyed.

O nearer dark whence Man descries

Abyssal lamps that flare and sink!

Profounds where stellar glories shrink,

Or Betelgeuse relumined flies!

In gloom as dense can Spica grope

As this that bars the human will?

Desires as vast her children fill,

Or kindred mystery and hope?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Lo! peaceless, ere the veiling day
Expand where now Arcturus shines,
I cry to night's ascendant Signs
The timeless questions of the clay:

Will Life, the bourne eternal crossed,
Attain the secret of her hours?
Will Sorrow find atoning Pow'rs,
And Love fare heavenward to her lost?

I lift entreating eyes to see
Gulf beyond gulf till sight relent,
Sun beyond sun till Time repent
Its question of Infinity.

Shall voice or vision cross the night
From glooms where grope the hands of Force,
On law's inexorable course,
To being's transitory light?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Shall Sirius resolve our fears?

Shall Vega's Lord command the Lyre
To scatter from her chords of fire
A music on the mortal years?

Shall Procyon with flaming tongue
Declare the doom his strength awaits,
Or Rigel's light reveal the Fates
Whereto his shadowed worlds have sung?

O silence of the changeless dark
Whence Hope uplifts unwearied eyes!
O patience of devouring skies
That close on Algol's dying spark!

Enhooved with gloom, the Age stamps down
The palace-flare of Babylon;
To night the lords of Ur are gone;
The Tyres of Time put by the crown.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

To Death the sons of Life are thrust;
From night to night the nations pace;
Empire by empire, race by race,
The generations pass to dust.

Enter, O Life! their place of dread,
And seek their silence to attain:
Shall Mystery renounce her reign,
Or darkness render thee thy dead?

Where stirs the energy they knew?
Joins it the forces undestroyed
That urge the suns within the void,
And shake the star in evening's dew?

Or sit they girt by laws unknown
Whereto the senses serve as bars—
With fire of unrecorded stars
That light a heaven not our own?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

The Night inevitable waits
Till fails the insufficient sun,
And darkness ends the toil begun
By Chaos and the morning Fates,

And starward drifts the stricken world,
Lone in unalterable gloom,
Dead, with a universe for tomb,
Dark, and to vaster darkness whirled.

How dread thy reign, O Silence, there!
A little, and the deeps are dumb—
Lo! thine eternal feet are come
Where trod the thunders of Altair.

O ashen bulks that haunt the Vast,
Beyond the ministry of Light!
O strong intrenchment of the Night
On charred Antares cold at last!

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Eternity! thine awful hands
Shall blot the Lion from our skies,
And build thy dark for future eyes
Where now illumed Orion stands.

Forever, infinite of range,
Unceasing whirls the cosmic storm,
In changeless gulfs where Force and Form
Renew the mystery of change.

A fleeting moment, to thy sight,
Lamp of thine altar Alphard burns;
Aldebaran to dusk returns,
And Betelgeuse is stone and night. . . .

What solitudes of gloom unknown
Abide, O Sun! thy future ways,
Ere Light at last a sceptre raise,
Resuming her forsaken throne—

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

When Law's compulsive angels sweep
 A sun unknown athwart thy path;
 When hands resistless wake the wrath
That smites to flame the boiling Deep!

And sprung from that recurrent storm,
 The youthful world exultant wheels,
 Where slow Eternity anneals
The manacles of Time and Form;

Where dim alchemic powers rebuild,
 To Law's immutable designs,
 The primal, unapparent shrines
With Being's basic mystery filled—

Fanes of the slowly fostered spark
 Whose fire shall light the groping clay
 To Reason's sympathetic day
And refuge from the bestial dark.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Reborn to that selective strife
And fury of ascendant wars,
What tidings of the immortal shores?
What covenant from Death, O Life?

When, in what maze of spacial bound,
Or cryptic glooms that wall the grave,
Hast heard the secret which we crave
From that inscrutable Profound?

What surety that thy sons attain
The litten council of thy Lords,
And thunder of seraphic chords
To music not of Time and Pain?

What whisper from the world new-born
Recalled thy footsteps to essay
The far, inevitable way
Lit sunward from thy mists of morn?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Nay! were Oblivion's nightward springs
 So fair to thine enchanted eyes
 That now forgot the message lies
From Mystery's reluctant kings?

Nay! are thy lips forever sealed,
 O thou that stoodst aloof with Death—
 Thou that with unrevealing breath
Hast passed the swords his angels wield?

She standeth mute. She cannot say
 (Ah! dumb to Love's appealing Deep!)
 If Death be suzerain of Sleep,
Or Lethe cross the road to Day.

She cannot say if she in sooth
 Abide Infinity's concern,
 Tho' Time's unanswered altars burn
In question to the final Truth.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

And yet from unaccording Fates
 We crave the secret of our tears,
 With trust in the betraying years,
And clamor at relentless gates.

And lost within the glooms that fill
 The Night's primordial realm unknown,
 See Mystery on a vaster throne
And Truth's far face receding still.

Shall yet the fearful answer fare
 To ancient life supremely wise,
 By seas that flash on alien eyes
The riven sunlight of Altair?

Athwart the gulfs of mote and mind
 How vast, to Sense, the shadow falls!
 She gazes from her proven walls
What deeps unfathomable to find!

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Lo! wearied with the fruitless quest
 Their shores invisible to mark,
 We turn us to the outer Dark,
And gleaming suns far-manifest.

Night! of the dooms to which they sweep
 What rumor from the battle's verge,
 Where sun and sun their chariots urge
To leaguers of the hostile Deep?

O Space and Time and stars at strife,
 How dreadful your infinity!
 Shrined by your termless trinity,
How strange, how terrible, is life!

How dark to Being's baffled glance
 The pits of night and nothingness,
 Where manacled in Law's duress
The allegiant Pleiades advance!

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Behold! her little sight is drawn
By Hope's untold, immortal ray;
Debarred, she seeks atoning day;
Beyond her gloom she dreams a dawn.

Thy secret, O profound of stars!
We, born of darkness, dare to seek,
Adjuring Rigel that he speak
His tidings of the eternal wars.

Capella! past thy lonely light
What Guardians rule the changeless void?
What final Eden undestroyed
Where seethe the caldrons of the night?—

Where, on the path of suns far-fled,
Aldebaran goes forth to doom;
Where unto night's tremendous tomb
The worlds of Procyon are led.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Ere yet below our sky-line dip
Thy sun-crowned spars to deeps unknown,
Ere yet our pharos-light be flown,
Declare thy cosmic port, O Ship!

Arcturus! from the abysses vast
That hush the Voices of thy strife,
Hast heard a whisper unto Life,
Assuring that she rest at last?

Crave ye a truce, O suns supreme?
What order shall ye deign to hark,
Enormous shuttles of the dark!
That weave the Everlasting Dream?

Shall Sirius light the gulfs untrod
That bar, O Life! thy claimant gaze?
Shall Betelgeuse attend thy ways,
Or Alphard guide thy feet to God?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Shall lone Antares whisper thee
His attestation to thy hope,
Or Alioth aid the souls that grope
Within the Night's infinity?

Dost dream to hold the ghostly heights
That soar beyond Mutation's reign,
Or sway the tides of Time and Pain,
Lord of the war Arcturus lights?

Wouldst set the Crown upon thy brow?
Wouldst still the Scorpion's heart of fire?
Wouldst tread the arc of Rigel's gyre,
Or greet the God his worlds avow?

Lo! claspt to His atoning breast
In Whom are woe and wrong made just,
Why this regression to the dust—
This loss of certitude and rest?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

What farce were that in which the soul
 Were summoned to celestial peace,
 And, ere her jubilation cease,
Dismissed to her ancestral goal?

To what emergency concealed,
 Abides the realm we seek to share
 Which to all antecedent pray'r
Eternity hath not revealed?

Hath Vega's night diviner shores?
 Shall Spica with surpassing ray
 Illume her worlds with vaster day
Than that Denebola outpours?

Dim are the laws the sages give,
 For Science sees in all her lands
 Illusive twilight, in her hands
The judgments of the Relative.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

Obscure the glooms that harbor Truth,
And mute the lips from which we crave
The guarded secret of the grave—
So soon grown dumb to word and ruth!

But ye, O suns! concede the boon
To those whose baffled eyes aspire
To search your syllables of fire,
And read Orion's telic rune—

The boon to know that Life abides
One with your immortality,
One with your changing mystery,
And foam of your eternal tides.

Exalt, Infinity, thy might,
Nor deem their decrement to mark.
Spread thou their ashes on the dark:
Behold! they leap again to light—

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

To light that summons Life to wake,
And stirred from consummated sleep
In matter's unconjectured deep,
From mire to mind the pathway take,

The pathway traced with blood and tears,
And dust of all our fathers dead,
Whose backward footsteps, wandering, red,
Fade to the mist of nameless years.

How oft, O Life, on worlds forgot,
Hast thou, in thine unnumbered forms,
Gone forth to Time's transmuting storms,
And fought till storm and stress were not!

How oft hast striven, hoped, and died,
And, dying, fared to gracious rest,
The Night's inevitable guest,
In alien realms unverified!

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

How oft to Mystery and Time
Returned, their ancient ways to hold,
With lips that never yet have told
The tidings of that distant clime—

With little hands that could not keep
The mighty message of the Night,
Nor bare to Day's appealing sight
The hidden annals of thy sleep.

Dost deem the eternity to come
The secret will disclose at last
Whereunto an eternal past
Held lips to revelation dumb?

How vast the gulfs of man's desire!
Children of Change, we dream to share
The battle-vigil of Altair,
And watch great Fomalhaut expire;

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

To live, where darkened suns relume
 Their kingdoms in the abysmal haze—
 Where nearing Night attends the blaze
Of high Antares red with doom;

To hear within the deep of Law
 The Word that moves her causal tides;
 To know what Permanence abides
Beyond the veil the senses draw.

And such the hope that fills thy heart,
 O Life! on some allegiant world
 Round Procyon's throne of thunder whirled
Or poised in Spica's gulf apart.

So dreamt thy sons on worlds destroyed
 Whose dust allures our careless eyes,
 As, lit at last on alien skies,
The meteor melts athwart the void.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS

So shall thy seed on worlds to be,
At altars built to suns afar,
Crave from the silence of the star
Solution of thy mystery;

And crave unanswered, till, denied
By cosmic gloom and stellar glare,
The brains are dust that bore the pray'r,
And dust the yearning lips that cried.

February, 1902.

MUSIC

Her face we have a little, but her voice
Is not of our imagining nor time,
And her deep soul is one, perchance, with life,
Immortal, cosmic. Heritage of her
Is half the human birthright. She hath part
With Love and Death in the one mystery
Of being, lifted on eternal wings
From world to world. Her home is in our hearts.
She is that moon for which the sea of tears
Is ever a-tremble, and she seemeth ghost
Of all past beauty, haunting yet the dusk
Of unforgotten days; for of the lost,
The changeless, irrecoverable years,
Regret will waken in her gladdest voice,

MUSIC

And linger, as the sorrow of a dream
Hath shadow for a little in the morn.

In echo and forewhispering of her,
Nature hath many voices—gracious sounds
Whereof she abideth spirit and unrest,
Being their mystery. Such is the voice
Of sea-torn headlands, and the song of pines,
When the world's harp is touched from out the
North;

All cadences and murmurs of the wind;
Cascades afar; vast whisperings of rain,
Nightward; æolian fruitage of the lute;
And gladness of the reawakened birds,
Heard in the morning twilight, like the drip
Of gems athwart a fallen lyre; the calls
That herald, in the wan, blue Arctic sky,
The wreaths of wild, Cadmean water-fowl;
Tinkle of nightly filletings of ice,

MUSIC

Touched by the dawn, and singing of all streams.
She is that sorrow in the ocean's voice.

In that undying garden of the years,
Sweet poesy, she liveth, and her breath,
Like winds a-whisper with a league of rose,
Is fragrance of its flower, she lying pent
Within the web and mystery of words,
Those films of song that of man's victories
Longest endure, outliving tower or dome
Of claspéd marble. Not in vain her spell
Hath fallen upon the poets: Keats outsang
His tender nightingale; and hearken Poe,
So sweeter than his bells! Great Milton made
Within that night (how clearer than our day!)
He shared with Homer, solemn harmonies
From out the names of ancient powers and realms,
Caught up and rolled in thunder on his voice.
And Shelley rained her tears from many a line.

MUSIC

So filleth she the high, immortal hearts
That sorrow unto song, so whispereth,
Haunting those deeper voices of the Lyre
That have the calling of Life's tragedy.
So calleth she, fast in whose golden toils,
Beauty, tho' captive, hath eternal reign.

Many are we that listen, yet her voice
First came not unto many, seeking first
Her chosen few, that heard her where she passed,
And saw thro' many veils her awful face,
And clasped her flaming raiment in their hands.
To these her voice was virginal, thro' these
She poured, tho' as an echo far removed,
The passion and the rapture and the storm
Of her great deep, full-tided. These are kings,
Having such queen as she. Silent we wait
Their telling of her glories, tho' their souls
Go mad with stress of the ineffable,

MUSIC

Yearning forever in their powerlessness
To cry the wonder heard, the harmonies
That surge upon them from her hidden deep.

Ah joy that leapeth in the living blood!
She hath the star of loveliness in dow'r,
And Beauty's every vision. At her call,
The fauns have fled their slumbering, the nymphs
Gleam in their mazy covert of the years,
Deep Arcadies, where all the woodland aisles
Are tremulous of blossom. At her call,
We see again the living rose-and-pearl
Fabled of Paphos, and the hurrying doves.
She with the wind awakened, we have heard,
Or seem to hear, the chime of faery feet,
Spurning the sea-strewn jewels of the moon;
Or listening, have lingered with the time
Wherein, to Aphrodite and the dusk,
With travail of the supplicating lyre,

MUSIC

(Low sorrow of the phantom, throbbing chord,
And fine insistencies of grievéd strings!)
Ineffably sang Sappho. Helen hath come,
Robed in Time's purple, and Semiramis
Hath lit her deepening twilight as a star.
Or Fancy, bolder for her voice, hath turned
Our dreams to pleasant madness, and we join,
Careless, the revels on a moonlit strand
Of dust of sapphire, softer for the toil,
Perennial, of seas of ruddy wine,
Whose purple foam the Naiads wear as crown.
She hath a realm her own, whose fragile isles,
The sudden Edens of the sea of tone,
Gather from shadow their illusive palms,
From mist their lilies, drawn to fluctuant form
By melody. And here allegiant moons
Wane at her passing, or in larger pearl
Restore her ghostly twilight. Here, unseen,
The lutes of all Elysiums of song

MUSIC

Awake in hidden hands, Orphean winds
Inducing her from quiet. And remote,
From starry gateways to her glooms of rest,
Flow mellow murmurings, and whispers vague
Of secret waters, and of harmonies
Adrift upon such wings as seem to bear
The weary unto sleep. For here abide
The ghosts of all sweet strains that to the soul
Pass through sound's charméd portals, and her winds
Are wafture of celestial wings that sweep
Her chords of shadowy gold to films of light.

Ah sense of something beautiful forgot!
The bubble joy lifteth from but a tear.
She wakeneth, who, changeless in her might,
Hath come immortal on her hidden ways
From other worlds and sorrows. At her voice,
Imagination bareth its high vault,
As when, in some great breathing of the night,

MUSIC

The clouds leave heaven lonely, and reveal
The deep of stars. Her beautiful unrest
Holdeth the soul, awaking with her fire
The hidden chords that of their trembling lift
Our Ilions of vision. She hath sought
The garlands of Aglaia, and the dawns
Of Elis, and hath found a solitude.
A silence broodeth on the lonely vale
That once was Tempe. Vainly may we mourn
Their empire faded like the realm of rose
Of some forgotten sunset. Oversoon
The twilight of their temples met the day.
Alas! ere long the rippling harps are mute!
The dust in Daphne wonderful and swift
Hath leapt from many ploughshares. Artemis
Had still a secret place, a holy dusk;
Her moonlight haunteth yet the hidden dew:
She sleepeth with her nymphs. Alcyone
Hath told her sadness to the evening star.

MUSIC

It stirreth nightly in the vibrant deep:
She cometh nevermore. The gods have passed.
They left us, as the soul for sleep, unheard,
With never a farewell, and fled afar,
In the sweet morning of an after-world
To waken beautiful. Delight and dream
Have passed beyond recall, and Memory
Forever walketh with Regret. The years
Grow dark. Our musings deepen. Life, a wraith,
Hath taken in futility the ways
That mete unending gloom. Heard from afar,
Her voice but mourneth, as the midnight sea's,
Borne from the foam and snows of haunted coasts.
And home she hath not—nay, nor any rest.
Waif of eternity, her sightless eyes
Are dewed of the illimitable mists
That clasp her. And her night is very strange.
And where she goeth, there is loneliness.
And where she loveth, Change and Death shall meet.

MUSIC

Music is the voice of the forgotten years,
The years that cry thro' her unchanging lips
Their loss and evanescence. For her hands
Are those of Memory, and lead the soul
To yesterdays regretful, and the hush
Of holy-lands beyond the winds of change.
In her the voices of our dead are met,
Vanished, lost light, beyond the bourne of Time—
An echo, and the tears are at our hearts.
Far wing the choric seraphim with her.
Lo! her ascensions and exalted thrones!
Ah, ringing of the swift, celestial feet
On unconjectured heights of harmony!
Silence and she are sisters. Silence waiteth
Ever beyond her ultimates of flight,
With gentle arms, and breast compassionate,
In welcome. Music hath forever there
A refuge tender, when, upborne afar,
Beyond the stress of thought, and reach of woe,

MUSIC

And past all travailing of finite things,
Swooning she faltereth of the Infinite,
Within the adumbration of whose light
Standeth the archangel Pain, whose holy eyes
Hold buried nights and seas; for whom, with her,
We take thro' storm and mystery the toils
Of life ascendant unto thrones afar,
And for whose shadows come the eternal stars
Of sympathy and peace. The voice of Love
To Sorrow, still she crieth to the soul
Its homelessness, and telleth of domains
Beyond the death-horizon, and of rest
Beyond unrest, and of forgotten dreams
That held the soul before this dream of life,
In hush or troubling of the psychic deep,
Being the voice wherewith immortal things
Speak from their darkness. At her heart abide
The unimagined harmonies that wait
The archangel races of the farther years,

MUSIC

Who to their changéd after-skies shall lift
The world's great evensong. Till that far dusk,
She stirreth as a hunger at the heart,
As grief and rapture of the human dream,
And as a calling from eternal heights.

A WHITE ROSE

How pure the light thy petals hold
In fragrance on the tideless air!
How gently come the hands that mold,
Nor break the sleep of color there!

How mutely on the richer day
Thy wafture floats of patient breath!—
We cannot hurry nor delay
The feet of Time and Love and Death.

Ah, calm thy day, ere evening take
Her misty throne, upbuilt anew
Of starlit gloom, till dawn awake
The topaz hidden in the dew.

A WHITE ROSE

And sweet thy night, ere, uncontrolled,
 The restless winds of dawn depart;
And, cast from sudden heights of gold,
 The shadows tremble at thy heart.

O brother-life! the silent Pow'r
 Constrains thy wings with other bars;
Remote from human time thine hour,
 Thine evening fair with alien stars.

Our senses light a little arc,
 Beyond whose twilight, vague, untrod,
The reaches of denying Dark
 Withhold the infinity of God,

Whose range of unrecorded night,
 And distance of eternal plan,
Isle in equality of light
 The stars of life in flower and man;

A WHITE ROSE

And waken to recurrent morn
Of bee or blossom, bird or leaf,
The life that in the days unborn
Shall sorrow in the halls of Grief.

When I, afar from human fears,
Illusive hope or joy intense,
May yet, beyond estranging years,
Attain the blossom's innocence.

THE SOUL'S EXILE

Slow to Hesperian gateways cold
The stricken daylight turns,
And lone upon the sunset's gold
The star of evening burns.

With hush of shadow dimmer grown,
With peace to weary things,
Night, from celestial glooms unknown,
Her holy silence brings.

She stills the mourning of the wind—
How very deep the rest
Her tranquil moonlight seems to find
Upon the lily's breast!

THE SOUL'S EXILE

Calm, beyond any dream of calm,
Her soul unfathomed lies;
The little fringes of the palm
Are quiet on her skies.

Untroubled sleeps the dreamless bird
Beside the sleeping rill;
The lucent stars alone are stirred,
For all on earth is still.

Profound the sense, at such an hour,
Of some forgotten change;
And distant moon and nearest flow'r
Alike seem far and strange.

IN THE BEGINNING

In panoply the nations wait,
Colossal, throned on many lands;
Strong to fulfill with mailed hands
The endless purposes of Fate.

To thee, America, the word
From deeps beyond the spirit's ken,
In accents all unknown to men,
Who, hearing, know not they have heard;

But who, in yearnings nation-deep,
Strive vastly, as a giant blind;
And docile to a hidden Mind,
The ways that It hath willed, they keep.

IN THE BEGINNING

For straightly, in a crimson flood,
A light hath sought thee from afar,
Effulgent of a spectral star,
The century-sun that sets in blood.

It crowns thee where the shadows rift,
And laps the armies and the ships.
It glimmers where with patient lips,
Awful and dumb, the cannon lift.

And Liberty hath touched to flame
A star within the nations' skies;
A fire than beacons far, nor dies;
Or, dying, leaves our night of shame.

But brief for them the Spaniard's rod;
Beyond our morning and our South,
They heard the message of her mouth,
Who, seldom speaking, speaks as God.

IN THE BEGINNING

The Mother girds Her, glad to be
Where war's long surf of carnage breaks.
E'en now her mighty breath awakes
The first low thunder of that sea.

May 1, 1898.

MEMORY OF THE DEAD

O thou that walkest with the quiet dead,
And keepest vigil in the darkness cast
Around the portals of the ruined past,
What the strange glory set about thy head,

That we, tho' other lands were surely fair,
Should wander with thee in thy shadow-lands,
And yearning, grope for unresponsive hands,
And faces vaguer for the twilight there?

For thou art risen from the ghostly sea
Of tears of many sorrows. Ah! but when
We turn aside to rest with Joy again,
We pause, we sigh, we wander yet with thee.

TO MY WIFE

Not beauty of the marble set
 To Art's intensest line,
Nor depth of light and color met,
 Tho' all indeed are thine—

Not these thy loveliness impart,
 For, wrought by wiser Hands,
The charm that makes thee all thou art
 Beyond transition stands;

And surer fealty to thee,
 O fairest! I confess,
For that beyond all fair I see
 The grace of tenderness,

Past Art's endeavor to portray
 Or poet's word to reach;
For all that Beauty seems to say
 Is told in feebler speech.

THE HAUNTING

Dear, thou art ever with me. For it seems
That in all forms of beauty I must trace
Thine utter loveliness, and find thy grace
In gardens where the drooping lily teems;
Nor may the vision vanish: still it gleams
In all of sweet and beautiful whose place
Is with the day; at nightfall, lo! thy face,
A phantom pearl within the gulf of dreams!

I would some hidden twilight held us twain
Wherein all rapture and nepenthe are;
Where we might lose the memory of Pain,
And smiling, gaze on Sorrow from afar,
As one long dead, who sees sad Earth again
From Paradise, and deems her but a star.

WAR

Ah! long ago, by that far hope beguiled,
Men said, "Tho' now his hands are strong with
steel,
Yet shall War tremble, and the Titan reel
Back into darkness, and his trumpets wild
Thrill with his death-cry. Then shall man, grown
mild,
Ere setting of the century-sun repeal
War's rubrics, and at gentler altars kneel,
And Peace come to us as a little child."

But with the falling of the last red sands,
Like to a blood-drop gleamed the morning-star;
And all the dawn burned crimson from afar;
And the new age upon the guarding lands
Came with a sword in his uplifted hands,
Crying the red evangel of old War.

NIGHTMARE

Departing troubled to her tryst with Sleep,
The soul, that night, paused doubtful and afraid
Within the portals and eternal shade
Of his great temple. All the shapes that sweep
Athwart its twilight, from the absym they keep
Rose in tremendous menace. She, dismayed,
Turned to her day in trembling, nor delayed
Her breathless flight from that portentous deep.

But thou, O Death! shalt feign no dream nor dawn,
Tho' æons sunder the hermetic tomb,
And light annul the mausolean gloom—
Nay! tho' contending sun to sun be drawn
In ruin that the worlds diffused attest
To watchers round Arcturus, *I shall rest!*

THE SPIRIT OF BEAUTY

In sleep I saw her, the immutable,
Who came in haunting on the farther dreams
Of all the poets. As a mist she fled
Before mine eyes enchanted; and her face
Was like a lily hidden in holy dusks—
Even such as gaze, in vision far from Time,
From out the skies of dreamland, being moons
In slumber's realm of shadow. And her eyes
Were great with griefs unsearchable, and gleamed,
Sorrow beyond them, like the larger dew
Of Aidenn, having each Love's perfect star
Mirrored therein. And with her came the hush
That follows music dying, or its peace
About all dead things beautiful. Low light,
Softer than shadow midmost of the rose,

THE SPIRIT OF BEAUTY

A raiment from the footfall to the brow,
Held her, and clung about her trembling hair.
And she spake words I knew not, but I knew
That this was she whom every poet's soul
Had found for once in vision, and had felt
Thenceforth her presence alway, that, unseen,
Still broke upon his sleep, and was by day
A hunger and a haunting and a grace,
Unutterable. For that chord the heart
Holds vibrant unto wonder, at her words,
Sang suddenly; and her untroubled voice,
Tho' glad, yet held an echoing of harps
To which dead singers had saddened, hearing there
The sorrow in world-voices and the tides
Of Time in travail. And the radiance
That clasped her limbs was as the memory
And afterglow of all transmuting light
That from old moons of Arcady fell wan
Thro' pearly blossom, or about the isles

THE SPIRIT OF BEAUTY

Of ocean, long forsaken of their gods,
Gleamed from the foam at twilight. And the hush
That drank her voice so like to falling rills,
Lay sweeter than all harmony : therein
Slept Music and her dreams, and there was set
The silence that enfolds the ineffable.
And I had spoken, but a wonder held
My lips, that I, unworthy, should behold
What others had in guerdon for the pains
Of Poesy (tho' seen but once, nor seen
Save unto sorrow) ; and in words half-mad
Had striven to stay her flight. But swift the mind
Turned with its dawn-light on that vale of dream :
She smiled, then passed forever to her day.

TO KATHERINE

Discerning its abode so fair,
So delicate with all of grace,
I deem thine eyes in truth declare
The inherent soul's abiding-place.

But oh! 't is harder of belief
To think, illumined with thy smile,
That thou art made a child of grief,
A waif our careless hours exile.

Yet such thou art. Thy spirit sighs
For vanished heavens that could not last—
A watcher of unchanging skies,
In lands and seasons of the past,

Where Memory, with tireless sight,
Seeks upon unforgotten ways
Her visions holy with the light
Of irrecoverable days.

MYSTERY

Men say that sundered by enormous nights
 Burn star and nearest star.
That where companioned seem the sister lights
 The great abysses are.

So held by Life's unsympathetic dark,
 We press to hidden goals.
From gulfs unshared the friending fires we mark,
 And we are lonely souls—

Your hearts, O friends! beyond their veiling bars,
 Are hidden deep away.
Your faces gleam familiar as the stars,
 And as unknown as they.

TO MY SISTER

O face where light and roses stir,
As bloomed on younger skies
The cloudland gardens faint that were
The dawn in Paradise!

What fanes of love—ere life be done—
What hearts shall hold thee fair,
Child of a line whose setting sun
Is yellow on thy hair?

What love shall wake thy dreaming breast,
Controlling thee in fears?—
Too young to know the heart's unrest,
Too innocent for tears!

TO MY SISTER

I fain in seasons yet untold
 Would stand thy trust and guard,
As one that, hopeless, longs to hold
 Thy virgin hopes unmarred.

Joy is the pledge of grief to be,
 A surety of the way
That leads to loneliness for thee,
 Who art so glad to-day.

For Beauty waits, and helpless waits,
 A heritage of woe;
She may not find pacific Fates,
 Nor years untroubled know.

And certain as the fine and pure
 Accord their gift of fair,
So sure must Sorrow wake, so sure
 Must come the feet of Care.

TO MY SISTER

Swift on the glory of the dream
The barren dawn must spring;
Not without shadow comes the gleam
Of any perfect thing.

Not they that grant us Beauty's light
Its deeper joy attain,
Since only worlds in outer night
The star's irradiance gain.

I deem it sad that Time should mar
A thing as fair as thou,
Or dim with years the locks that are
A light above thy brow.

But on the paths that wait thy feet
Unfriendly powers conspire;
The days thy heart shall find so sweet
Are wonderful but dire:

TO MY SISTER

The winds of Eden stir the rose
In gardens glad and strange,
Lost isles where Youth enchanted goes,
Nor dreams of care and change.

Life fashions, and in mystery,
A lure for Love's young eyes—
Fond Love, who changeless hopes to see
That rainbow on the skies!

Ah, holiness of beauty! lent
To mortals' undesert—
How far thy glories from content,
And with what peril girt!

May, 1902.

THE POETS

I saw from Tamalpais the morning star
Herald the morning thro' her gates of gold
(Tho' yet the night reigned absolute and old,
And day seemed past recall, or most afar);
Whereat the hosts of light that cinctured are
In evanescent roses, and that hold
The vanguard of the dawn, uprising, rolled
To sea the twilight's grey, enormous bar.

Sons of the dawn! you whose exalted light
Foreruns the day, from an inviolate height
Your voices fall; for, set above your kind,
You see the morrow when the world gropes blind
In ancient darkness—ere the East is white,
And the new mornings strike from mind to mind.

REINCARNATION

Once by the sea her lips, laid hushed on mine,
 Stirred faintly, saying, "I love thee!" Here, how
 still!

Nor in her eyes is that unchanging thrill
As of the starlight, solemn and divine,
Death being possessed of them, for if they shine,
 'T is by a sea that other shadows fill,
 Where foileth ever her pursuing will
The unapproachable horizon line.

Alas! if irretrievably we part . . .

 The spirit boweth with her weight of fears.
 Ah! met again within the farther years,
Shall I not know thee for the ghost thou art?
Or will there be no wonder at the heart
 And sudden starlight in remembering tears?

ON READING THE POEMS OF
FATHER TABB

So airy sweet the fragile song,
I deemed his visions true,
And roamed Edenic vales along,
Lit by celestial dew.

Illusive gleamed the timeless bow'rs;
The winds and streams were such
As Eve had mourned—but ah, the flow'rs!
Too delicate for touch!

THE PARTING

Gathered they sadly in that quieter day,
O soul! thy sister spirits, when that thou
Bent to thine ancient burden of the clay?
Fell not some ghostly tear-drop on thy brow?

Surely they stood as mourners, when the mesh
Of those recurrent cerements of the dust
Netted the spirit in her tomb of flesh.
They mourned, as ever the abandoned must.

And Memory, with all her joys and tears,
Departing cried: "Farewell! we meet again!"
But Sorrow said: "I for all worlds and years
In awful constancy to life remain."

THE PARTING

And Love: "I share with her the mortal skies."

 Their voices are forgotten here; yet when
In some dear face awake Love's changeless eyes,
 We tremble—almost we remember then.

WORDS FOR LANGE'S
"BLUMENLIED "

How many flowers are gently met
 Within my garden fair!
The daffodil, the violet,
 And lilies dear are there.

They fade and pass, the fleeting flowers,
 And brief their little light;
They hold not Love's diviner hours,
 Nor Sorrow's human night.

Tho' one by one their blooms depart,
 No change thy lover knows,
For mine the fragrance of thy heart,
 O thou my perfect rose!

THE ALTAR-FLAME

I saw a mountain at the close of day,
 Snow-crowned and lonely, where the after-glow
 Lingered, the ghost of sunset, fading slow.
I said, "This is God's altar, and the way
Earthward, of things eternal, even all they
 That see His face." And evening was, and lo!
I was aware how that inviolate snow
Upheld a fire! As one that in dismay
Views what he deems a mystery, so I
 Stood silent, till, an alien glory grown,
That light broke loose to a remoter sky
 And in its deeper heaven burned alone.
So had the star of evening, fancied nigh,
 Sate for a little that stupendous throne.

TO ONE ASKING LIGHTER SONGS

A gentle sadness best becomes
The features of the perfect Muse:
The shock of laughter but benumbs
The lips that crave immortal dew.

For she hath known diviner fears,
And she hath held her vigils far;
But never in untroubled years,
Nor world that grief came not to mar.

For joy is as the wreaths that lie
Foam-wrought along the sterile sands;
And sorrow as the voice whereby
The ocean saddens all its lands,—

TO ONE ASKING LIGHTER SONGS

That calls afar to pine or palm
The changeless trouble of the deep;
That murmurs in the gentlest calm,
And haunts, unknown, the realm of sleep.

But pleasure's foam, so fondly prized,
We strive to keep (unduly dear—
Its very touch scarce realized)
With hands unwarmed, till, lo! a tear.

THE SEA-FOG

Far from the marble reaches of the foam,
It wanders, phantom of the grey old sea.
The night wherein it passes silently
Was once a deeper darkness—even the home
Of the abyss. So might man's spirit roam,
Revisiting, from realms unknown set free,
Forsaken haunts of its mortality,
Sad in the changeless starlight of their dome.

So *she* might come; so from the eternal prime
Where night and sorrowing together cease,
Pass earthward in that piteous release.
And shall I call her from the tearless clime?
From dream and light of her abode of peace?
Nay, lest my grieving reach her out of Time!

THE NILE

Low moaning in the shadows of their might,

I echo all the voices of my dead.

I call, until their memory be fled,

Thoth and Osiris sepulchred in night,

High Cheops and the Ramses. In my sight

Arise the ruins of their pomp, stained red

As by eternal sunset. I am led

To where the seas are mystery and light.

Thus ordered stand thy destinies, O soul!

Thou callest, ere the lesser vision flee,

Thy cherished fled before thee to the goal

Far in the shadows of Eternity.

Thou art drawn down to where Death's thunders
roll,

And lost at twilight in a stranger sea.

DARKNESS

The Night sate weeping in a lonely land;
Or ever, in the faithless truce of Grief,
Held dumb communion—ominous relief!—
With Mystery and Silence, hard at hand.

Then crept that vast conspiracy to-West;
And then came bird-song and the sunlight, born
Of that unnoted miracle of morn,
And for my labor in the darkness, rest. . . .

My mind, grown weary with the day—it seemed—
Had lingered o'er the poet's lines too long;
Or snows of sorrow hid the flowers of song;
For fire and beauty shunned his page, I deemed.

DARKNESS

Then music was, and lo! beneath the dome
Of Song's high land I wandered. Found at last
Were seas and cities of the fabled past,
And faery islands girt with golden foam.

Will dawn at last, beyond the mortal years,
Reveal the land that now by faith we name,
And Music with celestial lips proclaim
The mystery of unrequited tears?

THE IDEAL

Red, in what maze of indecisive war,
Sought I thy dooming beauty in the past?
For as a light from firmaments o'ercast,
Or pharos high on Death's forgotten shore,
Thou flamest on my soul for evermore.
Thy burning eyes unsearchable outlast
All suns and furies of the cosmic Vast—
The stars supreme that Night to Godhood bore.

Thou art as Morning in her house of gold,
When mute, dethroned, unhappy Night hath fled
To refuge with the ocean grey and old,
Companioned by the vassal stars in flight,
And rout of armies panoplied in red.
The rest are shadows—thou indeed art Light.

TO COLONEL JOHN S. ENGS

Kindred to Art's creative school

Her sons discerning are:

So gleams within the glassing pool

The likeness of the star.

“SAD SEA-HORIZONS ”

I yearn, beside the solemn sea,
To pass its calm horizon-line:
In vain, O longing soul of mine!
The star it hides is not for thee.

How strong that hunger of the heart
For marvels past the haunted bourne
Of unfamiliar seas that mourn
The tale immortal to impart

Of loves forlorn and wars unsung,
Forgotten tragedies that were
Of old upon the sea, and stir
No music on the poet's tongue.

Ghostly, supreme, their voices lift
Beyond the purple of all seas;
They lure afar the questing breeze,
And call us that we follow swift—

“ SAD SEA-HORIZONS ”

Voices too sweet for mortal sense,
That waken where the billows surge
A little past the lonely verge
Of seas unknown that call us thence.

“ O beautiful and far away ! ”
The lips of ocean seem to cry
To youth divine that yearns to try
The perils of a distant day.

Star of romance, how far thy goal !
Remoter than the moons that gleam
Above the shadow-lands of dream,
Thy futile splendors stir the soul.

And we that seek thee shall not find,
Nor linger where thy marvels are,
Elusive as the sea-line far,
And all the secret of the wind.

EVENING

Slowly she wanders up the river sands,
Faint on her brow the flush of lapsing day.
She comes with Silence from the twilight lands,
And smiles to think the dawn so far away.

Day's fragrance lingers round her. In her hair
Are tiny lilies trembling lest they die;
And Sleep, her child, is near, who has in care
The weariness of worlds. The ceaseless cry

Of timid voices that the day had stilled
Comes to her wandering. Are those her eyes
That greaten with the dew, as if tear-filled,
Or lowly stars awaking in the skies?

EVENING

I shall not hear until mine evening come,
And flower-shadows fall across my grave,
The gentler voices that the day made dumb,
Nor hold the plenitude of peace I crave

ULTIMA THULE

Alone I watched one twilight-time
A little cloud go by,
Remote within the fairer clime
Of sunset's gleaming sky.

So far, so bright, it drifted on
O'er ocean's azure wall
I could but muse of glories gone,
In days beyond recall.

Swift, as to dim Hesperides,
The wind fled on its way;
It whispered to the kindly trees
And paused, but could not stay.

ULTIMA THULE

The evening star at ocean's brink
 Passed seaward with the night.
How pure it burned! I sighed to think
 What eyes would seek its light.

I fain with star and cloud and wind
 Had held elysian quest
And sought all secrets undivined,
 Beyond the mystic West;

But turned me to familiar things,
 A lowlier way to go,
For who shall take their deathless wings,
 Or who their freedom know?

A sense of loss was at my heart,
 Of beauty far and strange,
Of deeper joys in lives apart—
 And over all, what change!

THE SWOON

Upon me (as on Siddim's lethal plain
And on the cities of accurst desire
Came in its panoply of clinging fire
From Heaven's arsenal the mordant rain)
Fell Anguish. From that ministry in vain
Respite I sought: implacable that ire:
The torment deepened, lingering and dire,
Till God had numbered all the nerves of pain.

The mercy of her unremembered face
Oblivion turned upon me. At her sight,
Down gulfs beyond imagining to trace,
The realm of self sank in portentous flight;
The Spirit faltered in her secret place;
And lo! Pain's war rolled on another night!

THE CITY AND THE SILENCE

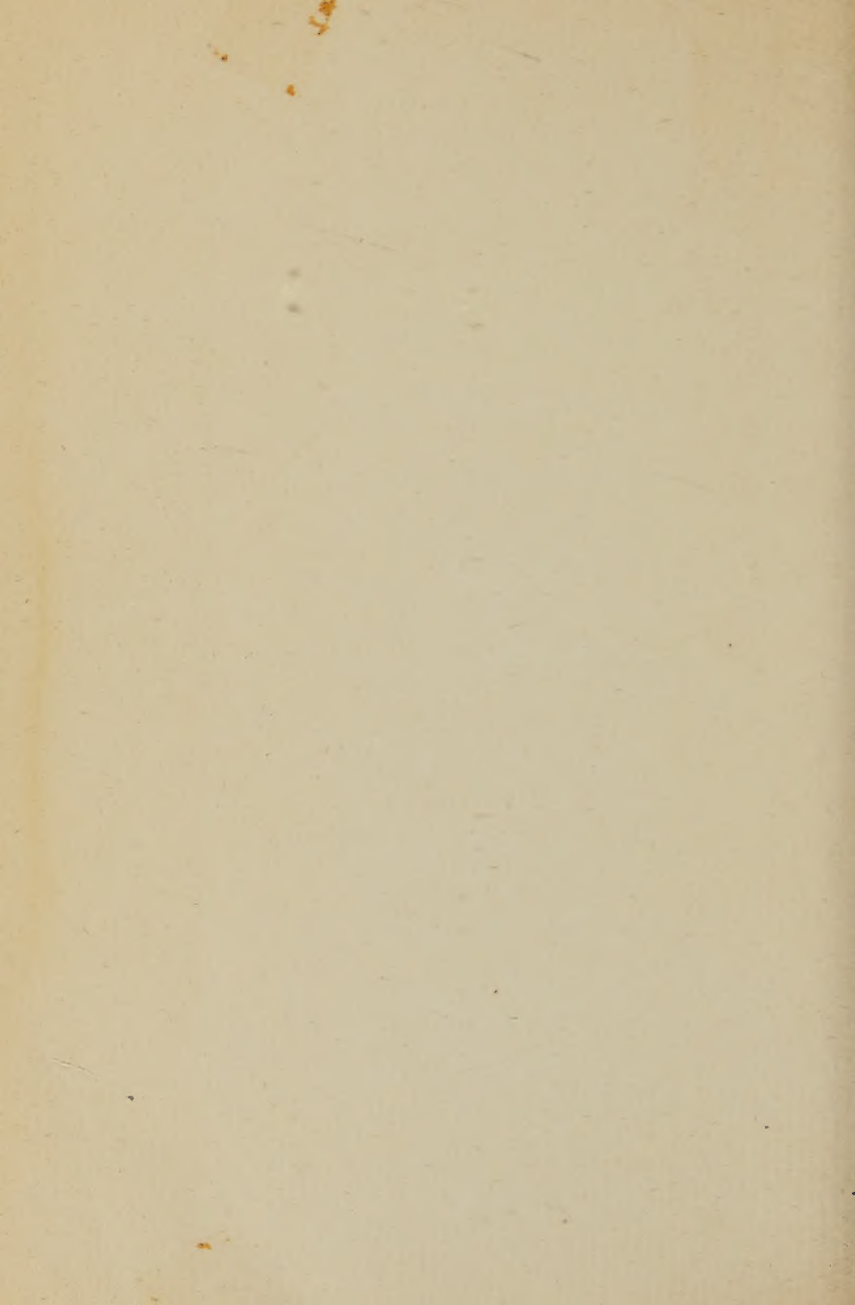
Deeper than ocean's thunder unsubdued,
Titanic voices of the warfare strong
Of man on fellow-man about me throng
In my captivity. Yet how elude
The tumult of the torrents that exclude
The voices that to loneliness belong?
How may I find thy silences, O Song?
Thine angels whisper but in solitude.

I am set far from that. Fast as a flow'r
In some sad city-garden, for release
I search my grim horizon without cease,
Craving, if only for a little hour,
The stillness and the shadow of a bow'r
Where the blue mountains hold a realm of peace.

THE DIRECTORY

Selective Time! 'mid all the burthened reams
Toil graves no name thy fretting moth shall spare,
Even tho' one say, "Behold! my fame, a flare
Remote in alien dusks, forever gleams,
Lingering with the star." For glory seems,
In sooth, a sunset drowned by glooming air,
Nor empire may the stellar vigil share—
Gone like the music of forgotten dreams!

Gone! till on worlds that serve a younger star
Estranged by voids that blot Arcturus' light,
Or sunder Vega from the bourne of sight,
Remoter life shall scan in vain the Deep—
Girt with the voiceless skies that hold afar
Eternal night, sealing the race's sleep.





Vol. 8

Stern

The testimony of the suns, and
Robertson 1907



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